

Castlemaine Naturalist

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Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



Great Crested Grebe

photo - Noel Young

Waves in the Mt Alexander Shire

Chris Timewell

Moths from the subfamily Sterrhinae are not large or flashy and not usually covered in Australian wildlife books and magazines. Thus, rarely have any been given common names. However, in the third volume of *Moths of Victoria*, authored by Peter Marriott and published as a book and CD by the Entomological Society of Victoria, the British common name for the Sterrhinae – Waves – has been adopted. The name refers to the wavy patterns on their wings.

The Sterrhinae is one of five subfamilies of the Geometridae family of moths that are present in Victoria. The Geometridae are small to medium sized moths, which can be common in urban areas and generally rest with their wings flattened against a surface. The Geometridae caterpillars are often called loopers or inchworms because they move their back claspers up to their front legs, thus forming a loop before moving the front part of their bodies forward.

As for the first two volumes of the *Moths of Victoria*, the third volume is an extremely high quality and excellent value-for-money publication. This volume provides hundreds of colour photos, descriptions assisting identification, summaries of ecology and Victorian distribution maps. Using these distribution maps and other accompanying information provided on the CD, the two tables below lists those Victorian moth species from the Subfamily Sterrhinae that are either known to occur or potentially occur in the Mt Alexander Shire.

In summary, from a total of 25 Wave moth species from five different genera that are known to occur in Victoria, at least 6 species from three genera have been confirmed as occurring in the Mt Alexander Shire (Table 1). Another 7 species from the same three genera are predicted to potentially occur in the shire (Table 2), with the remaining species unlikely. Not all of these species have been scientifically described and named.

Table 1. Common and Latin names of Subfamily Sterrhinae moths that are *known* to occur in the Mt Alexander Shire (sourced from descriptions in the *Moths of Victoria Part 3*).

Latin Name	Common Name
<i>Dithalama cosmospila</i>	Grey Spotted Wave
<i>Idaea costaria</i>	White-edged Wave
<i>Idaea pseliota</i>	Doily Moth
<i>Scopula Lydia</i>	Lydia's Wave
<i>Scopula optivata</i>	Varied Wave
<i>Scopula rubraria</i>	Reddish Wave

Table 2. Common and Latin names of additional Subfamily Sterrhinae moths that *potentially* occur in the Mt Alexander Shire (sourced from distribution maps in *Moths of Victoria. Part 2*)

Latin Name	Common Name	Possible	Maybe	Unlikely
<i>Idaea halmaea</i>	Two-spotted Wave		x	
<i>Idaea inversata</i>	Purple Wave		x	
<i>Idaea nephelota</i>	Clouded Wave		x	
<i>Idaea philocosma</i>	Flecked Wave	x		
<i>Idaea proleta</i>	Plain Wave			x
<i>Idaea</i> (undescribed species #1)	Undescribed Wave			x
<i>Notiosterrha aglaodesma</i>	Saltpan Wave			x
<i>Scopula achroa</i>	Achroa Wave			x
<i>Scopula hypocallista</i>	Dry Country Wave			x
<i>Scopula liotis</i>	Liotis Wave			x
<i>Scopula loxosema</i>	Wave		x	
<i>Scopula megalocentra</i>	Spotted Wave			x
<i>Scopula oppilata</i>	Oppilata Wave			x
<i>Scopula perlata</i>	Cream Wave	x		
<i>Scopula</i> (undescribed species #1)	Undescribed Wave			x
<i>Scopula</i> (undescribed species #2)	Undescribed Wave		x	
<i>Scopula</i> (undescribed species #3)	Undescribed Wave			x
<i>Scopula</i> (undescribed species #4)	Undescribed Wave			x
(undescribed species and unknown genus #1)	Undescribed Wave			x

Fryers Ridge, 29/10/11

Rita Mills

In the morning several of us went to the memorial get-together for Maggie Oliver, reminiscing with others who knew, loved and respected her, including her brother Mike and niece Jenny. There were roses on the table, and George Broadway showed some images from slides he'd taken over the years. After morning tea provided by Mike and Jenny, the Field Nats' contingent headed bush, which for us was the perfect conclusion.

The first stop was at the cutting near the nature reserve on Old Coach Road, to see the Bronzewood *Caladenias C. iridescens*. Those who could scrambled up the cutting and were rewarded by the sight of masses of flowers. My best memory is of looking down from the top to see a mass of yellow below, mainly *Goodenia blackiana* (Primrose Goodenia, or Native Pansies). I have never, in all my years in the bush, seen so many of them as I have seen this year. We found several of the Bronzewood *Caladenia*, and Purplish Beard-orchids *Calochilus robertsonii*, as well as Love Creeper *Comesperma volubile* and Erect Guinea-flower *Hibbertia stricta*. Those who couldn't climb didn't miss out, as there was plenty to see at a more sensible level, including some very nice specimens of Prickly Ti-tree *Leptospermum myrsinoides*. Altogether I recorded 21 species in that small area of probably little more than an acre.

We drove on and eventually came to the special area around the old fire tower site, and I even forget it was supposed to be lunch-time (well, we did have a hearty morning tea) as we spread out discovering more and more things. The lovely soft Dwarf Bush-pea *Pultenea humilis* seemed to be everywhere – we'd passed quite a few patches of it as we drove, and the Karalla, *Gompholobium huegelii* had more than its fair share of admirers, too. We didn't find as many Spider Orchids as last year, but there were still plenty to enjoy, and Onion Orchids were found, just coming into flower. There were even a few Wax-lip Orchids *Glossodia major*, still flowering.

After a rather late lunch Richard took us along the track winding towards an old mine, and we still kept finding more flowers. It was interesting to see how the flowering differed from last year. Some flowers that were common last year were few this time, others, such as the ti-tree, seemed to be flowering more profusely.

To finish the afternoon we went down Deardens track into one of the gullies, and



added a few more flowers which we had not seen up on the ridges, including some nice specimens of Trigger Plants *Stylidium graminifolium*, several healthy plants of the endemic *Grevillea obtecta* and some blue sun orchids which had closed for the day.

Altogether, a most enjoyable day; mild to warm, sunny with some cloud, a breeze and the company of like-minded people. Add to that a list of 55 plants in flower – and I probably missed some - and you'll understand why I for one enjoyed myself enormously.



Fryers ridge 29-10-11

Top left: The rare
Bronzehood Caladenia
Caladenia iridescens

Top Right:
Purplish Beard-orchid
Calochilus robertsonii

Left: Primrose Goodenia
G. blackiana



Clockwise from top left:

Comesperma volubile,

Helichrysum scorpioides

Flower spider and friends on
a sun-orchid.

Grevillea obtecta

Gompholobium huegelii

Fryers Ridge photos by Noel Young

Riddells Creek Field Trip, 12/11/11

Rita Mills

Again we had a near perfect day for our visit to the southern Macedon Ranges at Riddells Creek. Leaving Castlemaine at 11 o'clock, we had our lunch first – sitting under the pine trees in the Cemetery. That's where I stayed as I wasn't able to walk far, but the rest set out for a track at one side of the cemetery, and on up into the hills.

I was told when they got back that they had seen all sorts of wonderful things, but at least I'd been able to wander up to the back fence and checking out some mistletoe which was coming in to flower on a large eucalypt in the middle of the cemetery. While I was checking out which one it was (it proved to be Box Mistletoe) a couple of Eastern Spinebills flew in and started feeding on the mistletoe flowers. At the fence I saw Tall Bluebells, Black-anther Flax Lilies, Chocolate Lilies, two different Spear Grass species (could have been more than two) among the thick mountain undergrowth.

I walked on down the side fence, past Common and Button Everlastings, and spotted some peas through the fence. One was certainly Silky Parrot-pea *Dillwynia sericea*, and the other I couldn't name for sure, but its narrow leaves with a slightly bent tip, and its bright red and orange flowers seem to fit the Grey Parrot Pea *D. cinerascens*. As I got to the area of grass that hadn't been mown I began to find other plants such as Wiry Buttons, Milkmaids, Luzula, and weeds, but up out of this, just 3 or 4 metres in front of me, flew a small brown bird with a clatter of wings – a Brown Quail.

Of course the others arrived back eventually with a very nice bird list and stories of what they had seen, such as a large number of Tiger Orchids *Diuris sulphurea*, and a few Common Bird Orchids *Chiloglottis valida*. After a cuppa we set off for another track, with the hope of seeing some Great Sun-orchids *Thelymitra aristata*. I decided I'd have to at least try to have a bit of a walk, but what a track! Nevertheless, I got to see some of the sort of things that the others had been seeing all afternoon, though we didn't make it to the spot where the sun-orchids were.

Some of the other plants in flower for the day were – Late Black Wattle *Acacia mearnsii*, Dogwood (or Common Cassinia, or as I found out as I searched for its specific name, Dolly Bush or Mountain Itch!) *Cassinia aculeata*, Swamp Isotome *Isotoma fluviatilis*, Grass Trigger-plant, both the one that is really *Stylidium graminifolium*, and the one that we get around Castlemaine, which is now *S. ameria*, Wattle Mat-rush and Spiny Mat-rush *Lomandra filiformis* and *L. longifolia*, Hop Goodenia *G. ovata*, and Common Fringe-lily *Thysanotus patersonii*.

Birds – Superb Blue Fairy-wrens, Little Raven, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crimson Rosella, Striated and Spotted Pardalote, Eastern Spinebill, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Brown Quail, White-throated tree-creeper, Blackbird - and a few LBJs!

A big thank-you to Richard, Ian and Joy for sharing this place with us.



Riddells Creek (Barrm Birm) excursion.

Photos by Noel Young

Clockwise from top left – Blue Pincushion *Brunonia australis* , Tiger Orchid *Diuris sulphurea*, Swamp Isotome *Isotoma fluviatilis*, Native violet *Viola hederacea*.



Flinders Ranges Trip August 2011 – episode 2

Denis Hurley

We hadn't previously been in Wilpena Pound in August, and the rain and early spring gave us a wonderful showing of plants and the vigour of the insect population on them.

Beetles, moths, bugs and birds were busy luring and contesting in an attempt to pass on their genes. On one of our walks, we came across a shrike thrush with a most unusual repertoire that would have won over Christine if she had been a bird. He was the Pavarotti of the gully, but when we went back to see if we could record him, he had obviously signed on with another record company elsewhere. So you will have to take our word for it, but he certainly was an excellent mimic.

Large groups of up to 30 young, apparently same-age female emus travelled together, feeding on the grassy plains.



Meanwhile, dad looked after the chicks and could be seen regularly around the camp, defying four wheel drives with an arrogant launch across the road timed to say "this road is mine" and then being the good provider by leading the chicks to drinking puddles.

And goats were everywhere, including on the hills behind the plains where the girls were wandering. The goats came in all colours, with lots of kids in tow. The Park Rangers are conducting a clear out and some have been brought into the Park in contained study areas under a federally funded Bounce-back Project. Their foraging is much more aggressive than that of kangaroos. Goats eat everything; kangaroos select only parts of a plant and ensure their future food supply.





It is not possible to list the full range of plants, but some that we saw were: lobed hopbush (*Dodonaea lobulata*), silver cassia (*Senna artemisioides*) (pictured), smooth rice-flower (*Pimelea glauca*), silky guinea-flower (*Hibertia sericea* var. *sericea*), pink mulla mulla (*Ptilotus exaltatus* var. *exaltatus*), tomato bush (*Solanum quadriloculatum*) and the showy daisy-bush (*Olearia pimeleoides* ssp. *pimeleoides*).

..... to be continued

Bells Swamp 21/11/11

Rita Mills

A visit to Bells Swamp after we'd had lunch at Maldon seemed a good idea, especially as I'd learned that the road was open again. We'd paid several visits during the road closure, and I felt it would be interesting to find how the birds had



reacted to regular traffic again. I found few of the large birds, that there were plenty of smaller ones still, especially those that feed in the mud, and like the shallower water. There were few Pacific Black Duck, but lots of Grey Teal, and a couple of Shovellers. And there were lots of small birds, mostly White-plumed Honeyeaters and Red-rumped Parrots, and some I didn't manage to identify. Most of the birds were at the eastern end of the swamp.

My list for the ¾ hour added up to 33 species, with some very special ones:

Mudlark, Willy Wagtail, Eurasian Coot, Grey Teal, Little Grebe, White-plumed Honeyeater, Black-tailed Native Hens (dozens of them, including what I was sure were young ones), Shoveller, Starling, Little Corella, Long-billed Corella, Dusky Moorhen, Grey-shrike-thrush, Masked Lapwing, Little Pied Cormorant, Black-fronted Dotterel, Red-kneed Dotterel, Banded Lapwing, Galah, Pacific Black Duck, Yellow-billed Spoon-bill, Magpie, Musk Duck, Spotted Crake, Spotless Crake – both feeding on the still closed north bound road on the eastern end of the swamp near the flowering lignum – Superb Blue Fairy-wren, Red-rumped Parrot (scores), Shelduck, Hoary-headed Grebe, Striated Pardalote, Hard-head, Welcome Swallow, Rufous Songlark.



Above: Spotted Crake,
Below: Black tailed Native Hens

Baillon's Crake

photos Bells Swamp November 27, Noel Young



Please note – editor's changed email address

Those more astute readers may have noticed that my email address changed two issues ago. I have been meaning to draw attention to this, but ran out of room both times (which is always a good thing) The old one is still operating but not much longer, so please update your address list. I would hate to miss out on your much needed contributions! My new handle is as follows:

noel.young@optusnet.com.au

This meeting its our night - your opportunity to contribute something interesting
May I take this opportunity to wish all readers a very enjoyable festive season

- ED



Well, nest sites were a premium this year, so why not a pre-fab concrete tree? This Crimson Rosella and partner occupied the innards of this transformer pole on my nature strip and he defended the area for some weeks before disappearing. I don't know if they succeeded.

- Noel Young



Observations

- ◆ Recently Geoff Park had photos on his Blog of both the Great Egret and Nankeen Night Heron near Newstead. Two or three days later there was a Great Egret and a Night Heron with four juveniles at the Botanical Gardens – George Broadway
- ◆ Geoff Harris had an invasion of 2-400 Woodswallows (White-browed with some Dusks) at Barkers Ck, and Bee-eaters nesting at Guildford. Other reports of numerous WBWs from Denis (home) and Noel (Gower school). But late November most of them seem to have gone.
- ◆ Helen Morris had a pair of Spotted Pardalotes flying in and out of the shed for a week
- ◆ Rita reported that a relation in White Gum Rd recently flushed a pair of Black (?) Falcons from his large shed, which also hosts bats.
- ◆ Nigel Harland told the tale of a Grey Shrike-thrush which nested successfully for the last five years in a hanging basket outside the bedroom until last year when all its eggs were taken by a pair of Ravens. So this year it built on the shelf of a church pew outside the front door, and succeeded in raising chicks. The Ravens checked out the old site and didn't find the new one.
- ◆ Denis H found a Jacky Lizard in the yard and managed to photograph it - the first one seen here in 32 years of occupation!
- ◆ Richard drew attention to occurrences of the Western Bronzewood Orchids this year in spots along Porcupine Ridge rd. and Wewak tk., Loop tk and atop the cutting in Old Coach rd (see excursion p3)
- ◆ As Rita has confirmed her sighting of a Spotless Crake at Bells Swamp, it is interesting to note that I photographed a Baillon's Crake a week later. We both recorded the Spotted Crake, which means there are three species of Crake at the swamp! - Noel Young

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

December 2011

Sat December 3 Annual Bird Challenge Count – contact Chris Morris

Fri December 9 meeting: Members' night – Members “show and tell”.

Share a few photos, a nature experience, a poem – be as creative as you like. Slide and digital projectors available for use (Powerpoint or jpegs on either CD or USB key) Bring a plate – share supper.

Sat December 10 Picnic excursion - normal time. Location to be decided

Fri February 10 meeting: 2012 first meeting and AGM

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Denis Hurley's; 20 Merrifield St., at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2011

Ordinary membership: Single \$27, Family \$35

Pensioner or student: Single \$24, Family \$29

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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